

20 December 1994

Sea Turtle Coordinator, FWS, Region 4, Jacksonville, FL.

FY 1994 Sea Turtle Recovery Activities and FY 1995 Funding for St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge.

Refuge Manager, FWS, St. Vincent NWR, Apalachicola, FL.

#### 1994 Activities

St. Vincent NWR received (\$3,000) endangered species recovery funds (1113) for sea turtles in FY 1994. Part of the sea turtle funds (\$2,390) were spent to cover approximately one pay period of the refuge wildlife biologist's, GS-9, salary. Nine miles of beach were surveyed by staff for sea turtle emergences daily from 15 May through 30 September. Each emergence was examined for eggs and all nests were protected with screening. Sea turtle funds (\$21) were used to purchase screening and stakes used for sea turtle nest protection. After hatching or 75 days after the eggs were laid all nests were examined to determine nest success. All unhatched eggs and hatchlings were collected and frozen. Routine beach patrols are conducted year round searching for stranded sea turtles. Both Loggerhead and Kemp's Ridley sea turtles have been found on our beaches.

St. Vincent Island has a large population of raccoons and feral hogs. Both represent serious threats to the survival of sea turtle eggs and hatchlings. We purchased raccoon traps with sea turtle funds (\$193). We managed an aggressive trapping and control program to reduce the threat that raccoons pose to sea turtle nests. We also managed an aggressive hog control program. The majority of the costs for these control efforts were paid for with refuge funds.

Sea turtle funds (\$375) paid for the wildlife biologist to attend the 14th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. He presented a poster paper "Effects of Predator Control on Sea Turtle Nest Success on the Barrier Islands of Apalachicola Bay." Sea turtle funds (\$18) were used for some of the graphics used in the presentation. Reprint requests for the manuscript were numerous and refuge funds covered the costs.

We cooperated with our Panama City Field Office by collecting eggs and hatchlings for the study entitled "Effects of Environmental Contaminants on Loggerhead Sea Turtles." No additional funds were allocated to the refuge for these activities.

The biologist prepared a "Sea Turtle Protocol For St. Vincent NWR." It was reviewed and approved by both state and federal

sea turtle coordinators and will guide our sea turtle conservation efforts on the refuge.

Administrative needs, the remainder of the Wildlife Biologist's salary for sea turtle activities, vehicle maintenance, and assistance by other staff to conduct sea turtle activities were covered by other refuge funds. A breakdown by subactivity of funds spent in FY 1994 on sea turtle activities follows.

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ST. VINCENT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (41650)

<u>Subactivity</u>	<u>Costs</u>
1113	2997.00
1260	13143.00
9120	10865.00
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Total	27005.00

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1995 Planned Activities

The refuge plans to continue sea turtle monitoring and predator control measures at or above the level of FY 1994. The trend in nest numbers has been upward and we expect to spend more time in FY 1995 managing nests. Supplies will be purchased with sea turtle funds. If funding levels permit fuel and maintenance for the four-wheeler used for permit surveys will be covered by sea turtle funds.

If funds are available we would like to purchase a much needed rifle for predator control. We would like to purchase a Ruger, Model 77, 22 Magnum and scope (est. cost \$600.00). Feral hogs and raccoons pose serious threats to sea turtle nests on St. Vincent NWR. Recently coyotes have been invading the refuge. Just five miles up the coast from the refuge coyotes have become the number one predator to sea turtle nests at St. Joseph Peninsula State Park. Dispersing juveniles could easily end up on St. Vincent NWR and may already be conditioned to preying on sea turtle nests.

Funds will be spent for the wildlife biologist to attend the 15th Annual Symposium on Sea Turtle Biology and Conservation. He will co-author and present a poster paper titled "Sea Turtle Nesting and Management in Northwest Florida".

The remainder of funds, if any, will be spent on a small portion of the wildlife biologist's, GS-9, salary. Other

refuge funds will again be used to cover the majority of the expenses to manage sea turtle activities at St. Vincent NWR.

Donald J. Kosin